

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration in view of the herewith-presented remarks is respectfully requested. Claims 1-52 were pending in this application. Claims 10-38 and 48-52 are withdrawn from consideration.

RESPONSE REGARDING ALLEGED 102(b)/(e) AND 103(a) REJECTIONS

Claims 1-5, 9, 39, 45 and 46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by International Application No. WO 95/26256 to Mueller ("Mueller '256"). Claim 47 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Mueller '256. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Based on the present official action the Examiner seems to have accepted applicants' arguments, but now the Examiner seems to be saying that Mueller '256 constitutes citable prior art and, in the Examiner's view, indeed anticipates claims 1 and 39.

Applicants respectfully disagree. As explained in applicants previous response and for those reasons, applicants believe the Examiner's rejections are in error, Mueller '256 does not show the preforming of a collar of material so this feature of the claims is not disclosed by this citation.

Applicants note, however, that in section 7 of the office action, in particular the last paragraph the Examiner states:

"Applicants cannot rely upon the foreign priority papers to overcome this rejection because a translation of said papers has not been made of record in accordance with 37 CFR 1.55. See MPEP § 201.15."

This seems to be suggesting that, if applicants were to file a translation of German application 195 35 537.7 (the priority document of this application) the rejections based on Muller '256 would be withdrawn.

The present application is derived from the PCT application PCT/EP96/04 188, which claims the priority of the German application 195 35 537.7. Applicants provide herewith a certified translation of this application.

It is believed that since applicants have perfected their right to foreign priority that the Examiner's rejection can be properly withdrawn.

In conclusion, it is believed that all of the pending elected claims are in condition for allowance. Early and favorable action by the Examiner is earnestly solicited.

AUTHORIZATION

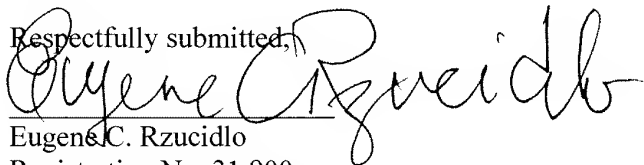
If the Examiner believes that issues may be resolved by telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned at (212) 309-1214. The undersigned may also be contacted by e-mail at gcr@hunton.com

No additional fee is believed to be necessary other than the three month extension of time fee. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for this amendment, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-2536.

In the event that an extension of time is required, or which may be required in addition to that requested in a petition for an extension of time, the Commissioner is requested to grant a petition for that extension of time which is required to make this response timely and is hereby authorized to charge any fee for such an extension of time or credit any overpayment for an extension of time to Deposit Account No. 50-2536.

Dated: March 7, 2008

By: Respectfully submitted,



Eugene C. Rzucidlo
Registration No. 31,900
Customer Number: 58785
Hunton & Williams, LLP
200 Park Avenue
52nd Floor
New York, NY 10166